



The Asian Classics Institute



Diamond Mountain University

Name:
Date:
Location:
Track:
Grade:

IN-DEPTH COURSE III

Master Shantideva's Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life Exploring the Border Between You and Me

Answer Key, Class Five

1) Quote the verse in which Master Shantideva describes the highest of all secret practices. (Sanskrit and Tibetan tracks in these languages also.)

Here is the verse in which Master Shantideva describes the highest of all secret practices:

Anyone who really wants
To quickly reach some shelter for
Themselves and every other being
Must exchange themselves and others;
Must carry out the very highest
Of every secret practice.

,GANG ZHIG BDAG DANG GZHAN RNAMS NI,
,MYUR DU BSKYAB PAR 'DOD PA DES,
,BDAG DANG GZHAN DU BRJE BYA BA,
,GSANG BA'I DAM PA SPYAD PAR BYA,

a#tma#naM ca para#Mshcaiva yah% shi#ghraM tra#tomicchati /
sa caretparamaM guhyaM para#tmaparivartanam //

2) Master Prajnyakara Mati clarifies this verse, saying that the words “highest of every secret practice” refer to the practice of exchanging oneself and others. He goes on to explain why we might want to keep the practice secret. Describe his position.

About why the practice of exchanging self and others might be considered secret, Master Prajnyakara Mati says that, first of all, people who do not have a karmic propensity for this practice might be frightened or disturbed when they think about doing it. (This also implies that if we did it really well, it might actually be a little overwhelming.) He then says that people like this might furthermore come to disrespect the practice, and then cause themselves to take a rebirth later in the realms of hell. He concludes by saying that the

practice of exchanging ourselves and others must definitely be done with great respect and honor for the whole idea. As a general rule, our good deeds are also more powerful if we can learn to do them anonymously.

3) Master Shantideva describes our body as “the true enemy.” In what sense is this true, and in what sense is it not?

Master Prajnyakara Mati clarifies what Master Shantideva means when he says that the body is our true enemy. He says that the very essence of an enemy is someone who makes us afraid. If we look at all the physical fears we have in the world—being bitten by a snake, being mugged and beaten by a thief—they are all caused by our attachment to our body: I am afraid that my body will be hurt. Since the body creates all these little fears, it is the source of all fear, and thus our greatest enemy. At the same time, we need this body to carry us through our life, to reach our final goal. And only a human body such as the one that we possess has all the necessary elements that enable us to practice the secret teachings—such as yoga—and turn into a being of light. As such, our body is a priceless opportunity.

4) Master Shantideva introduces here the problem of cherishing oneself, describing how we kill animals for example “in order to cure the illness of the body.” What is the difference between cherishing oneself and holding on to oneself as self-existent? Are they connected? (Sanskrit and Tibetan tracks, give the two words in these languages also.)

Cherishing oneself is taking care of oneself at the expense of others. It stems from the habit of holding onto oneself as self-existent: thinking that we and the things that we need and enjoy *do not* come from how we treat other people. Cherishing oneself is called *rang chendzin* {RANG GCES ‘DZIN,} in Tibetan, and *atmanupurva* {a#tma#nupu#rva} in Sanskrit. Holding on to oneself as being self-existent is called *dakndzin* {BDAG ‘DZIN,} in Tibetan, and *atmabhava* {a#tmabha#va} in Sanskrit.

5) Cherishing oneself causes all of the lesser negative deeds that we do, and as Master Shantideva points out, can also cause some drastic negative deeds that might lead us to a birth in the realms of hell. Give the two examples of drastic negative deeds which he mentions.

Under the influence of cherishing ourselves, we might even kill our parents—or at least wish that they might die soon—in order to obtain their wealth, through inheritance. This is a particularly powerful negative karma, because it is our parents who have granted us the body and mind with which we can attain niravana and enlightenment. If our

cherishing ourselves manifests as an improper need or desire for money, then it may drive ourselves even to take for ourselves funds that have been dedicated to spiritual purposes. Both of these deeds would have the result of throwing us, after death, into the realms of hell.

6) Quote the famous verse about how we should think whenever any material benefit comes to us—say, for example, a paycheck.

Any time we obtain something, we should immediately consider whether we should give it to someone else who might need it, or use it for ourselves. The verse here goes as follows:

Thinking of yourself and saying,
"If I give, what will I have
For me?" is nothing but demonic.
To think of others and to say,
"If I use this for myself,
What will I give?" is Angel Dharma.

,GAL TE BYIN NA CI SPYAD CES,
,BDAG DON SEMS PA 'DRE YI TSUL,
,GAL TE SPYAD NA CI SBYIN CES,
,GZHAN DON SEMS PA LHA YI CHOS,

yadi da#sya#mi kiM bhoks%ya itya#tma#rthe pisha#cata# /
yadi bhoks%ye kiM dada#mi#ti para#rthe devara#jata# //

7) This last verse, about deciding what to do with the money and things that come to us, is a good example of how the ancient Sanskrit texts were translated in different ways, by different Tibetan translators, many centuries ago. Explain.

The English words "Angel Dharma" here (*hla yi chu* {LHA YI CHOS} in Tibetan) are literally "kingship of the gods" in the original Sanskrit (*deva rajata* {devara#jata#}). We know from Master Prajnyakara Mati's commentary here that he was working from a different translation, because he explains that "those who work only for the benefit of others are like the King of the Gods." We should note however that the versions of the master Tibetan translators of the past are extraordinarily pure and accurate; just that a translator cannot always convey multiple meanings of a single word from another language through a single word in their own language.

8) Master Shantideva says that the karmic result of depriving others for our own desires is to suffer in lower births such as the hell realms. What does he list as the karmic result of depriving ourselves for the desires of others?

He says that, if we deprive ourselves for others, then we will come to attain every excellent thing there is. So in a sense, depriving ourselves for the sake of others is anything *but* depriving ourselves.

9) Master Shantideva says that “the desire to be better than others brings us lower births, lowness, and idiocy.” Explain the distinction between these three results.

The desire to exalt ourselves at the expense of others first of all can throw us into one of the lower births, as an animal, a craving spirit, or a hell-being. Even if we are reborn as a human, we might be “low” in the sense of being born into an impoverished area of the world, or in a particularly weak or unattractive body. The word “idiocy” here refers to a mental result, of becoming unintelligent. Master Prajnakara Mati notes here how powerful a *mental* karma can be—the simple *wish* to excel at the expense of others—in producing both physical and mental results.

10) Give, in English, the famous verse here about where the happiness and the pain of the world come from.

The English of the verse is:

**The total amount of happiness
That exists in the world has come from
Wanting to make others happy.
The total amount of suffering
That exists in the world has come from
Wanting to make yourself happy.**